

Historic, archived document

Do not assume content reflects current
scientific knowledge, policies, or practices.

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

HOMEMAKERS' CHAT

Wednesday, July 10, 1940.

Subject: "GETTING A REGIONAL LIBRARY STARTED." Information from Bureau of Agricultural Economics. Publication available, Farmers' Bulletin 1847-F.

--ooOoo--

One of the teachers in a rural school in one of our Eastern States is also the school librarian. She remarked recently that her library work was about to be doubled,- that is, she would have to do much of it after school hours,- because the school had agreed to allow the whole community to use the school library.

"But that's a fine thing," she added. "It's the first time I've heard of the school and the community getting together in just this way. And I don't mind doing my share to get things started. You see, under the progressive system of education the children are expected to do a great deal more reading on all sorts of subjects than they used to. They ask questions at home that the parents can't answer, and that brings the parents around to the library, too. You'd be surprised at the great variety of topics that are in demand.

"For example, the teacher does not merely assign a few pages in a text book. Instead she practically asks the children to carry a message to Garcia. She asks them to find out about say, the Coronado Expedition, or cotton growing, or the "Plow that broke the Plains." And of course, in searching out the information for themselves, they generally go to the library. With the independence and self-reliance of a Roman, many of them spend a lot of effort in reading and gathering information to bring back to the class.

"Our little school library gets its books now from the State library through the book truck. If this library in the school becomes as popular in our community as I think it will, we'll soon be able to urge the State library people to establish a regional library center somewhere in the county,- possibly at the county seat."

That librarian's remarks illustrate a process that is going on in many rural communities. The Bureau of Agricultural Economics of the U. S. Department of Agriculture reports that more than 39 million rural people at present do not have permanent library service. Many of these farm families are asking how they can get this service, provided chiefly out of public funds. And the American Library Association, quoted in one of the Bureau's publications, suggests a number of practical things such interested persons can do to get the right kind of books to read.

Sometimes the county is the best unit for library service, and sometimes several counties can unite in setting up a regional library. Both county and regional libraries usually maintain some sort of book truck or van which delivers a change of books at regular intervals to each smaller library center, or even to individuals.

A county or regional library movement may spring from one person's or one organization's interest in having a library. In the case of the Maryland school just described, the P.T.A. furnished the impetus. From this beginning must come concerted action by all kinds of people in all parts of the county or region, and by many organizations. Sometimes when there is a State Library Commission, its extension agency takes the lead in library development within the State. So the first step in getting a county or regional library started is to consult this State library agency which usually has its headquarters at the State capital.

Find out what laws in the State would affect the establishment of the service desired, what facilities the area may include, what State grants, if any, are available, and what help may be obtained from State work-relief library projects.

The next step is to have your own organization study this information and recommend action. Maybe a State library worker could come to a meeting to answer questions and discuss library needs. The county agricultural agent and home extension agent and county superintendent of schools are helpful persons to ask also to such a meeting.

If your State is one of the few without a well-established library agency, the president of your State library association may be able to help your committee with some of the details. For of course you should have a committee to represent all the groups interested.

Meantime, while a county or regional library is developing, you may be able to get the use of books. In some States you can write to your State library agency for books by mail. In some States you can ask your local organization to get a traveling library from the State agency and help find a good place for it and a good person to check out the books to the readers. You can start a book club. And you can enroll in one of the State reading projects, if your State is one of the several that has such projects, to suit all kinds of tastes.

These general suggestions for getting library service are capable of variations to meet different situations, but the result should be the same,- opportunities for extended, worthwhile, modern reading facilities for rural people who want them. "There is no frigate like a book."

One word more: There's a government bulletin on rural library service, which gives a number of plans for such services used in different parts of the country, and tells what some of these plans cost. The number is 1847-F, and you can get a copy free by writing to the U. S. Department of Agriculture.

#####

